Ammonius of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the Origins of Gospels Scholarship

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Abstract: In the early third and fourth centuries respectively, Ammonius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea engaged in cutting edge research on the relationships among the four canonical gospels. Indeed, these two figures stand at the head of the entire tradition of comparative literary analysis of the gospels. This article attempts to provide a more precise account of their contributions, as well as the relationship between the two figures. It argues that Ammonius, who was likely the teacher of Origen, composed the first gospel synopsis by placing similar passages in parallel columns. He gave this work the title *Diatessaron-Gospel*, referring thereby to the four columns in which his text was laid out. This pioneering piece of scholarship drew upon a long tradition of Alexandrian textual scholarship and likely served as the inspiration for Origen's more famous *Hexapla*. A little over a century later, Eusebius of Caesarea picked up where Ammonius left off and attempted to accomplish the same goal, albeit using a different and improved method. Using the textual parallels presented in the Diatessaron-Gospel as his "raw data," Eusebius converted these textual units into numbers which he then collated in ten tables, or "canons" standing at the beginning of a gospelbook. The resulting cross-reference system, consisting of the Canon Tables as well as sectional enumeration throughout each gospel, allowed the user to find parallels between the gospels, but in such a way that the literary integrity of each of the four was preserved. Moreover, Eusebius also exploited the potential of his invention by including theologically suggestive cross-references, thereby subtly guiding the reader of the fourfold gospel to what might be called a canonical reading of the four.

Although the modern study of the Synoptic Problem did not begin until the late eighteenth century, with the debate carrying on vigorously up to the present, scholarly interest in the relationships between the gospels emerged much earlier in the Christian tradition, indeed, already in the late second or early third century. Often overlooked in this respect are the contributions of two innovative early Christian authors, Ammonius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea, who pioneered the study of the interrelationships among the four

canonical gospels. To be sure, the Synoptic problem is a more precise question about the literary origins of the gospels, and it is unclear to what degree these two authors were pursuing an answer to this exact issue. Nevertheless, an articulation of the Synoptic problem begins with a simple observation of the degree of both convergence and divergence among Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and it is precisely such parallels and non-parallels that these two authors were aware of and attempting to investigate.

Although Eusebius' contribution to this subject, his system of Canon Tables, is included in Nestle-Aland's recent 28th edition, and has been since the seventh edition over a century ago,[1] this marginal apparatus usually receives little comment and is easily ignored. Ammonius' work, which I will argue was titled the *Diatessaron-Gospel*, is even more obscure, since no copy survives and as a result our only knowledge of it is the short description provided by Eusebius. Moreover, as I shall ague below, among those previous scholars who have commented upon these two figures there has been a lack of clarity regarding the precise relationship between their respective works, with some using ambiguous terminology that blurs the distinctions between them and others arguing incorrectly that the two works had nothing in common. Hence, in what follows I intend to highlight and give a more nuanced account of the distinct contributions of these two figures in what was a joint scholarly[2] enterprise representing the earliest thorough study of gospel relationships. In so doing I propose a new interpretation of Ammonius' title, the *Diatessaron-Gospel*, while also highlighting the origins of his work in ancient philological scholarhsip. Moreover, I argue that Eusebius' invention was materially indebted to the

[1] For a discussion of its inclusion in the seventh edition, see E. Nestle, "Die Eusebianische Evangeliensynopse," *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* 19(1908): 40-51, 93-114, 219-232. The version of Canon Tables printed in subsequent editions, right up to NA28, is unchanged from that of Nestle's seventh edition. Note, however, that Martin Wallraff of the University of Basel is currently preparing a critical edition of the Canon Tables, to be printed in the WUNT series.

[2] I use the word "scholarly" to describe the work of Ammonius and Eusebius as a reference to their participation in the wider world of Greek textual learning and investigation, which had its origins in the library and Museum at Alexandria in the third century BCE. As noted by Eleanor Dickey, "scholarship" in this sense refers to "any type of work concentrating on the words, rather than the ideas, of ancient pagan authors: textual criticism, interpretation, literary criticism of specific passages, grammar, syntax, lexicography, etc." (*Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises, from Their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period*, American Philological Association (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), vii). See further René Nünlist, *The Ancient Critic at Work: Terms and Concepts of Literary Criticism in Greek Scholia* (Cambridge: Cambridge

composition of the earlier Alexandrian, against what many scholars have previously stated. Finally, I draw attention to the way in which the Canon Tables were designed to guide the reader of the gospels to a theological, indeed to a canonical, interpretation of the tetraevangelium.

1. The *Diatessaron-Gospel* of Ammonius of Alexandria

1.1 Who was Ammonius?

The only description of Ammonius' work on the gospels is found in Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*, in which the Caesarean historian lays out the origin and function of his system of Canon Tables. Here Eusebius gives no further details about his predecessor beyond the fact that he was from Alexandria (Ἀμμώνιος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεύς[3]). However, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius also mentions an Alexandrian Ammonius who composed, among other works, a treatise titled *On the Harmony of Moses and Jesus* (Περὶ τῆς Μωυσέως καὶ Ἰησοῦ συμφωνίας). This Ammonius, the historian tells us, was "highly esteemed among many" (παρὰ τοῖς πλείστοις εὐδοκιμοῦντος), and his works were still in circulation among the "scholarly" (παρὰ τοῖς φιλοκάλοις) in the early fourth century.[4] The fact that in the *Letter to Carpianus* Eusebius offers no further description of the Ammonius engaged in study of the gospels may indicate that he knew nothing else about this figure. However, it is more likely that he is brief in his mention of Ammonius because he assumed his readers would already know of his identity, a supposition that coincides well with the reported fame of the Ammonius responsible for the *Harmony of Moses and Jesus*. It is best, therefore, to assume these two Ammonii are one and the same, a conclusion already reached by Jerome in the later fourth century who gave a brief notice of

University Press, 2009).
[3] Eusebius, *Carp.* (NA[28], 89*).
[4] Eusebius, *HE* 6.19.10 (Gustave Bardy, *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres V-VII* (SC 41; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1955), 116). It has been suggested that a passage in Eusebius' own *Demonstratio evangelica* draws upon this lost work of Ammonius on Jesus and Moses. Cf. J. Edgar Bruns, "The 'Agreement of Moses and Jesus' in the 'Demonstratio Evangelica' of Eusebius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 31 (1977): 117-125.

Ammonius in his *De viris*.[5]

A further argument for the attribution of the two works to the same Ammonius is their common theme. Eusebius does not tell us why Ammonius composed his work on the gospels, but it likely was the same as Eusebius' own intent behind the Canon Tables, namely, to show the harmony and agreement of the evangelists. Similarly, Ammonius' other work was focused on presenting the συμφωνία between Jesus and Moses. Common to both the relationship of Jesus to Moses and the interrelations of the fourfold gospel is the possibility of discord which threatens to undermine divine truth, an Achilles heel exploited by Christians such as Marcion, as well as by pagan critics like Celsus and Porphyry. It is plausible, therefore, that a second or third century Christian engaged in these debates might deem it necessary to demonstrate both the "harmony" of Moses and Jesus and of the four separate accounts of Jesus' life.

Saying more about this Ammonius, however, necessarily enters into more contested territory. Indeed there is an ongoing, and perhaps at some level irresolvable debate over the identity of the Ammonius discussed in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Taking a definite position on this issue is unnecessary for the argument of this article, but some awareness of the terrain will be useful background. The already alluded to passage concerning Ammonius occurs in Eusebius' narrative of Origen's life and work. The historian quotes a section from Porphyry's work against the Christians in which the Neoplatonic philosopher asserts that Origen had been a "hearer" of an Ammonius who was renowned for his philosophical learning. Ammonius serves for Porphyry as a positive contrast with Origen. Whereas Ammonius began life as a Christian and gave up his faith to learn philosophy, Origen received philosophical training, but turned his back on it to live as a Christian. In response to this extract from Porphyry, Eusebius asserts that Origen was in fact a Christian from his youth, and that Ammonius remained a Christian until the end of his life, as evidenced by his many works

[5] Jerome, *vir.* 55. Jerome attributes to this Ammonius two works: *De consonantia moysi et iesu* and the *Euangelici canones*. The latter work is undoubtedly the same one that Eusebius refers to as the *Diatessaron-Gospel*, though Jerome refers to it by the title of Eusebius' own Canon Tables, probably reflecting a confusion already at this stage over the exact relation of the two works. The fact that Jerome names only these two works of Ammonius may indicate that he has no independent access to them and is entirely dependent on the reports of Eusebius. Theodor Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius und andere Ammonii," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 38, (1920): 4-5, also argued that the same Ammonius was responsible for both works.

which were still in circulation.

The dominant trend in scholarship has been to interpret Porphyry's statement to mean that Origen was a student of the Platonist Ammonius Saccas, who also taught Plotinus, and that Eusebius simply confused the Christian Ammonius with the pagan philosopher. If this line of thinking is correct, then there is little more we can say about our Ammonius in the way of a more precise date. Theodor Zahn, representing this position, asserted that Eusebius spoke of Ammonius as someone who had neither died recently nor been in the distant past, and so placed his literary activity in the years 240-280 CE, making him a younger contemporary of Origen who died in the mid 250s.[6] If, however, Eusebius was correct that the Ammonius, whom Porphyry says was Origen's philosophical teacher, composed these two works, then there are at least two other possibilities. It may be, as Elizabeth Digeser has recently argued, that Ammonius Saccas himself dabbled in Christian topics and so was responsible for the *Diatessaron-Gospel*, though no other ancient sources make any mention of such literary activities.[7] In her reading, the two named Christian works of Ammonius coincide well with later reports that attribute to Ammonius Saccas the achievement of harmonizing Plato and Aristotle. Alternatively, as Mark Edwards has pointed out, there is also multiple attestation for a further Ammonius besides Ammonius Saccas the Platonist, and this additional figure was regarded as a Peripatetic. The Peripatetic Ammonius, who was also praised

[6] Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius," 4-5. Cf. Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 24-25, who also accepts that the Christian and pagan Ammonii were distinct individuals, and that Eusebius incorrectly attributed the Ammonian Christian writings to the Platonist Ammonius Saccas.

[7] Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 23-48. Digeser argues that scholars have long been misled in thinking there must have been two Ammonii by the mistaken assumption that Christians and philosophers were two separate groups in antiquity. This, however, hardly fails to take account of the historical arguments brought forward by Mark Edwards for his position (see n.9 below). Ilaria Ramelli similarly implies that Ammonius Saccas wrote *On the Harmony of Moses and Jesus* though she does not comment upon the *Diatessaron-Gospel* ("Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 226). As supporting evidence she points out that the Middle-Platonist and Neo-Pythagorean philosopher Numenius, though not a Christian, wrote allegorical exegesis of the Old and New Testaments. The debate over the identity of Origen's teacher Ammonius is related to a further debate over whether there were one or two Origens. On the latter view there was a Christian Origen as well as a Platonist Origen who were contemporaries. Ramelli argues for a single Origen (pp.235-244), while Mark Edwards has argued for the existence of two Origens (see the sources in the following footnote).

by Longinus for his great philosophical learning, must have flourished in the last decades of the second century, and so would have been an older contemporary of Origen who could have served as his teacher.[8]

As stated already, it is beyond the scope of this article to settle this debate, if it is even possible to do so with final certainty.[9] Moreover, on any of the above solutions the main conclusions of this article should hold true, since any of the proposed Ammonii would have been a contemporary of Origen, and, as I shall argue below, Origen's *Hexapla* provides us with the closest parallel for Ammonius' *Diatessaron-Gospel*, illuminating the format and the scholarly context of this work. For my purposes the question then simply becomes one of priority. If Eusebius confused two distinct individuals, then the Christian Ammonius was perhaps later than Origen and the *Diatessaron-Gospel* may have been modelled on the earlier *Hexapla*. If, on the other hand, Eusebius was correct that Origen's instructor in philosophy also composed Christian works, then it is more likely that Ammonius' gospels scholarship provided an impetus for Origen's text-critical work. I am sympathetic with Edwards' point that Eusebius had access to a great deal more sources, especially about Origen's life and career, than we ever will,[10] and that we should trust his report unless there are good reasons not to do so. For this reason I incline to the view that Origen's teacher composed the *Diatessaron-Gospel*, whether this was the Peripatetic or the Platonist Ammonius, and will proceed on this basis.

1.2 Eusebius' Description in the *Letter to Carpianus*

[8] Mark Edwards, "Ammonius, Teacher of Origen," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 179-181; ibid., *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 54-55. Edwards points out that in fact neither Eusebius nor Porphyry in the passage cited by Eusebius assert that Origen's Ammonius was Ammonius Saccas who taught Plotinus. In contrast, Digeser wishes to identify the Platonist and Peripatetic Ammonii in light of the fact that Ammonius Saccas is said to have harmonized the teachings of Plato and Aristotle (*A Threat to Public Piety*, 28-30). The debate over whether Origen was taught by the Platonist or Aristotelian Ammonius is, as one would expect, tied to ongoing attempts to isolate the philosophical sources for various aspects of Origen's thought, with scholars claiming to have found Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic elements. I am indebted to clarifying discussions with Mark Edwards and Kellen Plaxco regarding these debates over Origen's Ammonius.

[9] These Ammonii are to be distinguished from a later fifth-century exegete with the same name who left behind exegetical fragments in the catena tradition. See further Joseph Reuss, "Der Presbyter Ammonius von Alexandrien und sein Kommentar zum Johannes-Evangelium," *Biblica* 44, (1963): 159-170.

[10] Edwards, "Ammonius, Teacher of Origen," 174.

It is significant that when Eusebius came to describe his system of Canon Tables, he did so by situating his project in the tradition going back to Ammonius. He could have drawn upon his predecessor's work without acknowledging his intellectual debt to his forebear, as so often happened in antiquity. The fact that he did not do so was probably due to his genuine esteem for Ammonius' accomplishment. Having found out himself how complicated this issue could be, Eusebius started the letter by tipping his hat to the "industry and effort" (φιλοπονίαν καὶ σπουδήν) exerted by Ammonius in his study of the gospels. He then provides a one sentence summary of the work, which is our sole surviving description of Ammonius' composition:

> τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων ἡμῖν καταλέλοιπεν εὐαγγέλιον, τῷ κατὰ Ματθαῖον τὰς ὁμοφώνους τῶν λοιπῶν εὐαγγελιστῶν περικοπὰς παραθείς[11]
>
> He has left behind for us *The Diatessaron-Gospel*, having placed alongside the [Gospel] according to Matthew the sections from the other evangelists which agree [with those of Matthew]

Clearly what Eusebius is describing here is something akin to a modern gospel synopsis with parallel columns.[12] Ammonius dissected the latter three gospels in order to align the parallels he found there with corresponding passages in Matthew. Thus, some Matthean passages would have had corresponding material in all three parallel columns, but many would have included text in a lesser number, probably leaving the columns empty when there was no related material from a given gospel.[13] Ammonius' choice of Matthew as his base text is

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[11] NA28, 89*. There are two previous English translations of the entire letter. See Harold H. Oliver, "The Epistle of Eusebius to Carpianus: Textual Tradition and Translation," *Novum Testamentum* 3, (1959): 138-145; Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 121-122. A portion of the letter is also translated in Anthony Grafton and Megan Hale Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 198. I have usefully consulted these previous translations, but all translations of the letter in this article are my own.

[12] So also Theodor Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur, Tl. 1 (Erlangen: Deichert, 1881), 33, and, again, Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius," 6-7, who rightly pointed out that Ammonius made, not a gospel harmony, but a gospel synopsis. Confusion over this issue began as early as Victor of Capua in the sixth century who supposed that the works of Tatian and Ammonius were similar. Zahn perceptively noted that whereas Eusebius uses the verb συντίθημι ("combine, compose") in *HE* 4.29.6 to describe Tatian's composition, he here uses παρατίθημι ("place alongside") for Ammonius' undertaking.

[13] Similarly, Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 88, argue that Origen, in his *Hexapla*, probably left his columns empty when he had no text to serve as a parallel.

notable and must have been a deliberate decision, probably related to Matthew's position at the head of the fourfold gospel.

Eusebius does not tell us what Ammonius did with passages from Mark, Luke, and John that had no correlate in Matthew. As suggested by Adolf von Harnack, the fact that Eusebius calls the work τὸ εὐαγγέλιον implies that the remaining material from these latter three gospels was probably also included.[14] Moreover, Eusebius does not criticize Ammonius for leaving out this bulk of material, even though he was critical of other aspects of his predecessor's work. For these two resaons it is likely that this non-Matthean material was included, but it is difficult to say how he presented it. Whatever method he used must not have interrupted the continuous flow of Matthew's text, since Eusebius points out only that the order of the latter three were disrupted. It is possible that the rest of the non-Matthean text was included at the end as a sort of appendix, or perhaps Ammonius left large gaps in his Matthean column to allow for the presentation of text without Matthean parallels, albeit while preserving Matthew's narrative sequence.

We should linger for a moment over the title Eusebius gives for Ammonius' composition. I noted above that in his brief account in *De viris* Jerome calls it the *Euangelici canones*, but his account is clearly derivative from that of Eusebius so it seems unlikely that he had actually seen Ammonius' composition. Instead, he was probably borrowing the title of Eusebius' own Canon Tables and applying it retrospectively to Ammonius' earlier work. In contrast, it is quite likely that in this passage from the *Letter to Carpianus* Eusebius gives us the actual title that originated with Ammonius: τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον. Of course, this is the same title that Eusebius also gives for the more famous composition of Tatian, the so-called Diatessaron. I will return to Tatian's work shortly. For now we should consider how this title might relate to the work of Ammonius.

Interpreting the title of Ammonius' composition largely centers on how

[14] Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Erster Theil (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1893), 406-407. Harnack was disagreeing with Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 33, who had asserted that Ammonius did not include material from the latter three gospels that lacked a Matthean parallel. However, Zahn later changed his position in "Der Exeget Ammonius," 7, where he suggested that Ammonius left large gaps in his column of text from Matthew to allow the material from the other gospels without Matthean parallels to be displayed appropriately.

one should understand the preposition διά. Here there are at least three possibilities. First, it has long been supposed that the phrase διὰ τεσσάρων alludes to classical musical theory, specifically the interval of a fourth, one of the various possible συμφωνίαι.[15] Though somewhat late, Boethius is a good representative of this tradition, referring to the *symphonia diatessaron, quae princeps est.*[16] If we recall that Ammonius, according to Eusebius' history, also composed a work aimed at demonstrating the συμφωνία between Moses and Jesus, the possibility of a musical background for the phrase διὰ τεσσάρων is strengthened. There are, however, at least two other possibilities that must be considered.

A second explanation comes from the fact that some sources attest to the use of διά to indicate the material out of which something is made.[17] For example, Diodorus Siculus speaks of "images made from ivory and gold" (εἴδωλα δι' ἐλέφαντος καὶ χρυσοῦ), andfadditin

Plutarch mentions sacrifices "made with flour, drink-offerings, and the least costly gifts" (δι' ἀλφίτου καὶ σπονδῆς καὶ τῶν εὐτελεστάτων πεποιημέναι).[18] In keeping with these parallels, the title τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον could imply that the four gospels were Ammonius' source material, and the result of his editorial labor was a εὐαγγέλιον constructed from these four parts.

A third possibility is that διά here might be referring, not to Ammonius' source materials, but rather to the resulting character of his work. Here the comparison with Origen's *Hexapla* becomes relevant. As is well known, the *Hexapla* consisted of between six and eight texts arranged in parallel columns, including the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew text, and as many Greek translations as Origen had available for any given book, using the Septuagint, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion as a core.

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[15] For a survey of this material, see Paul A. Underwood, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (1950), 119-122. For further discussion, including an overview of older scholarship on this idea, see William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 25 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 49-51. As pointed out by Petersen, the fact that Victor of Capua called the gospel harmony in *Codex Fuldensis* a *Diapente* rather than a *Diatessaron* has also given rise to speculation about whether Victor had in mind such musical connotations.
[16] Boethius, *De institutione arithmetica* 2.48. Cf. Ammonius' likely contemporary, the Pyrrhonian Skeptic Sextus Empiricus, who refers in passing to "the harmony of the fourth in music" (ἐν μὲν μουσικῇ τῆς διὰ τεσσάρων συμφωνίας) (*Adversus mathematicos* 1.77).
[17] LSJ, s.v. διά, A.III.2.
[18] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 17.115.1; Plutarch, *Numa* 8.8. Cf. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 14.56 (βρώματα διὰ μέλιτος καὶ γάλακτος γινόμενα).

Two surviving fragments of the *Hexapla* for the psalms have confirmed this layout of the work, and they show that Origen allowed only one word per line, maximizing the potential for comparative analysis.[19] Origen's *Hexapla* is justly famous and known primarily because of its importance for textual criticism of the Old Testament, and also for its enormous scholarly achievement given that the complete work may have filled nearly forty codices of 400 folios each.[20]

By calling his work the Ἑξαπλᾶ Origen was highlighting its most distinctive feature, namely its format, consisting of six parallel columns. As Rufinus stated, "on account of this manner of composition, he [i.e., Origen] called the exemplar itself *Hexapla*, which means 'written in sixfold order'" (*propter huiuscemodi compositionem exemplaria ipsa nominauit* Ἑξαπλᾶ*, id est sextiplici ordine scripta*).[21] A similar passage that is even more important for my argument is found in the description of the *Hexapla* given by Epiphanius in his *Panarion*. After listing the Greek versions used by Origen, Epiphanius noted that the Alexandrian master included the Hebrew text in Hebrew characters. Then, "using a second, parallel column opposite [the first]" (ἐκ παραλλήλου δὲ ἄντικρυς, δευτέρᾳ σελίδι χρώμενος), he placed the Hebrew words, though "in Greek letters" (δι' Ἑλληνικῶν δὲ [τῶν] γραμμάτων). The result was that

> ὡς εἶναι μὲν ταῦτα καὶ καλεῖσθαι Ἑξαπλᾶ, ἐπὶ <δὲ> τὰς Ἑλληνικὰς ἑρμηνείας <γενέσθαι> δύο ὁμοῦ παραθέσεις, Ἑβραϊκῆς φύσει δι' <Ἑβραϊκῶν> στοιχείων καὶ Ἑβραϊκῆς δι' Ἑλληνικῶν στοιχείων, ὥστε εἶναι τὴν πᾶσαν παλαιὰν διαθήκην δι' ἑξαπλῶν καλουμένων καὶ διὰ τῶν δύο τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν ῥημάτων.[22]
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> these [books] were in fact, and were called, *Hexapla*, since in addition to the [four] Greek translations there were two additional juxtaposed [columns], Hebrew in the natural manner with Hebrew

[19] See the images at Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 97, 99.
[20] Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 105. Cf. Heine, *Origen*, 73-76.
[21] Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.16.4 (Eduard Schwartz and Theodor Mommsen, *Eusebius Werke. Zweiter Band* (GCS; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1908), 555). As noted by Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 94-95, although Rufinus' work was a translation of that of Eusebius, he here diverges from his source by giving greater detail.
[22] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64.3.5-7 (Karl Holl and Jürgen Dummer, *Epiphanius II* (GCS; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980), 407-408). The Greek text is also cited, with translation at Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 92-93, 318, n.12. I have followed the translation of Grafton and Williams, with some modifications. See also the slightly fuller description given by Epiphanius at *De mensuris et ponderibus* 510-535, where he again explains the name *Hexapla* as resulting from the six juxtaposed σελίδες in which the text was presented. The Greek text is cited, with English translation, at Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 318-320, n.13.

> letters and Hebrew with Greek letters, such that the entire Old Testament was in a sixfold form, being so called due to the two [columns] of Hebrew words

Note first the use of the term παραθέσις ("juxtaposition"), cognate to the verb παρατίθημι used by Eusebius to describe how Ammonius placed passages from the gospels alongside one another. In addition, I want to suggest that the usage of διά here provides the clearest parallel for the function of the preposition in Ammonius' title. Epiphanius uses it three times to refer to the characters in which the text is written, either "through Hebrew letters" or "through Greek letters." Here the sense of διά refers to the format or presentation of the text in these columns, a usage that closely parallels a technical sense that the preposition sometimes carries in other scholarly texts.[23] Then, drawing his summary to a close, Epiphanius refers to the resulting six column format of Origen's work with the phrase δι' ἑξαπλῶν, a striking parallel to Ammonius' διὰ τεσσάρων. Additionally, this passage also recalls the remainder of Ammonius title: τὸ ... εὐαγγέλιον. Just as Ammonius put τὸ εὐαγγέλιον in the form of διὰ τεσσάρων, so also Origen put ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη in the form of δι' Ἑξαπλῶν.[24] In both cases, the διά clause refers to the format of the work, while the rest of the title refers to its content.

The most significant difference between the title of Origen and that of Ammonius is that Origen uses the compound form ἑξαπλοῦς ("sixfold") from ἕξ + ἁπλόος and cognate to ἐξαπλόω ("to multiply by six").[25] In contrast, Ammonius'

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[23] So Dickey, *Ancient Greek Scholarship*, 118, who notes that discussions of spelling "normally use the formula διά + genitive." She gives as an example the phrase διὰ τοῦ α γράφεται which means "it is written with an α." A similar usage of διά may be found in the third-century author Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae* 1.8) who commented that Timachidas of Rhodes wrote a treatise on banquets "in epic verse (δι' ἐπῶν) in eleven or possibly more, books." Here διά indicates not the source of Timachidas' work, but rather its format or style of composition.

[24] Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 34; Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius," 7-8, also pointed out the similar format between Ammonius' work and the *Hexapla* though he thought that the *Hexapla* inspired Ammonius, rather than the other way around, as I am suggesting here. Moreover, he did not consider the comparison of the titles of the two works.

[25] This compound form may derive from ancient library traditions. The twelfth-century Byzantine scholar Joannes Tzetzes reported that the library of Alexandria consisted of 400,000 "mixed books" (βίβλων συμμιγῶν) and 90,000 "unmixed and single books" (ἁπλῶν δὲ καὶ ἀμιγῶν βίβλων) (*Prolegomena de comoedia Aristophanis* 2 (W.J.W. Koster, Prolegomena de comoedia. Scholia in Acharnenses, Equites, Nubes [Scholia in Aristophanem 1.1A. Groningen: Bouma, 1975]: 22-38)), and Plutarch claimed that the libraries of Pergamum contained two-hundred thousand "single books" (βυβλίων ἁπλῶν) (*Ant.* 58). In these references ἁπλόος seems to mean scrolls containing only a single author, or perhaps only a single work. The compound form ἑξαπλοῦς, then, would imply a work comprising six components.

work uses the simple cardinal form τέσσαρες. Despite this minor difference, the usage of διά plus a number to describe the format of Origen's work is the most suitable parallel for the sense of the preposition in Ammonius' title. On this reading, the διά of Ammonius' title refers not to his four source texts, as one might assume, but rather to the four-column manner in which he presented these texts. Origen's presentation of his sources in parallel columns was highly unusual, and so it is understandable that his title reflected this fact.[26] The same would have been true of Ammonius' usage of parallel columns, so it is reasonable to suppose that he too would have drawn attention to this fact with the title of the work. Notably both authors left undefined what the numerical adjective refers to, allowing the simple adjectival form to function substantivally. In light of the preceding passage from Epiphanius, a likely candidate for the assumed missing word is σελίδες, "columns." This makes it difficult to settle on a title in English that adequately captures the sense of the Greek. The closest equivalent might be "The Four-Columned Gospel" or "The Gospel in Four Columns," but perhaps the best way to refer to Ammonius' composition is simply by transliterating it as we do with the *Hexapla*, calling it the *Diatessaron-Gospel*.

There is one further passage, highlighted nearly a century ago by Theodor Zahn that must be considered. In book five of his *Commentary on John*, Origen, while refuting the Marcionite error, argued that

> ὡς εἷς ἐστιν ὃν εὐαγγελίζονται πλείονες, οὕτως ἕν ἐστι τῇ δυνάμει τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν εὐαγγέλιον ἀναγεγραμμένον καὶ τὸ ἀληθῶς διὰ τεσσάρων ἕν ἐστιν εὐαγγέλιον.[27]
>
> as he is one whom the many preach, so the gospel recorded by the many is one in its meaning, and there is truly one gospel through the four.

Zahn was right to argue that the unusualness of the phrase τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον makes it highly unlikely that Origen's statement here has no relation to the other usages of the phrase in antiquity.[28] Nevertheless, the fact that

[26] Of course scrolls regularly presented texts as a series of columns. However, multiple works placed in parallel columns was highly unusual.
[27] Origen, *Jo.* 5.7 (Cécile Blanc, *Origène: Commentaire sur Saint Jean, Tome I (Livres I-V)* (SC 120; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 386-388).
[28] Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius," 5-6.

Origen uses the phrase in passing, without giving it any sustained attention or attributing it to any other source makes it difficult to interpret his usage. Zahn supposed that Origen has in mind the so-called "Diatessaron" of Tatian, and that the adverb ἀληθῶς is intended as a polemical contrast with that earlier work. However, given that Origen nowhere else gives any indication of knowing Tatian's gospel, it is more likely that he here has in mind the earlier work of Ammonius, with no polemical edge intended. When four-gospel codices began to be produced, which occurred by the mid-third century at the latest and so probably within Origen's lifetime,[29] the phrase τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον would certainly have been a suitable title, referring to the one gospel that proceeds "through" the four separate, consecutive versions. In this case, the phrase would represent an extension of Ammonius' usage, and would still be a reference to a distinctive format of a book, although now referring to four successive versions, rather than four simultaneously parallel texts. This, of course, is assuming that Ammonius' work was prior to or at least contemporary with Origen, either of which would be compatible with any of the Ammonii proposed above. Therefore in this passage Origen probably demonstrates an awareness of Ammonius' work, and his appropriation of Ammonius' title may be a reference to the fourfold gospel in a single-codex format.

At this point someone will likely object that Tatian's usage of the same title for his work undermines the preceding argument, since his edition of the gospel contained neither parallel columns nor multiple sequential texts, but simply a single, continuous narrative. However, this objection only applies if Eusebius is correct in calling Tatian's work the "Diatessaron."[30] In fact, I have argued elsewhere, based on the later Syriac evidence, that Tatian most likely

[29] The earliest undisputed papyrological evidence for a four-gospel codex is P45, usually dated c.250. T. C. Skeat argued that P75, dated to 175-225, once belonged with P64, P67, and P4 and formed a four-gospel codex (T.C. Skeat, "The Oldest Manuscript of the Four Gospels?," *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 1-34). However see the response to Skeat's proposal in Peter M. Head, "Is P4, P64 and P67 the Oldest Manuscript of the Four Gospels? A Response to T. C. Skeat," *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 450-457, and a survey of the matter in Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 36-37.

[30] At *HE* 4.29.6 (Gustave Bardy, *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres I-IV* (SC 31; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1951), 214) Eusebius states that Tatian called his work τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων [εὐαγγέλιον]. The εὐαγγέλιον in brackets is an emendation to the text suggested by Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 37, in light of the fact that the word "gospel" appears in both the Latin and Syriac translations of Eusebius' history.

called his text simply "The Gospel," and that Eusebius is not to be trusted in this instance, especially since he himself implies that he has never seen a copy of Tatian's edition.[31] If so, then the title τὸ διὰ τεσσάρων εὐαγγέλιον quite likely originated with Ammonius and later came to be attached erroneously to Tatian's very different editorial work, with the influence of Eusebius ensuring that this confusion would become dominant in the later tradition. In fact, it is probably because the title "Diatessaron" has been traditionally associated primarily with Tatian's work that scholars have not previously considered the possibility that the parallel with the *Hexapla* might shed light on the meaning of the phrase.

1.3 Alexandrian Scholarly Traditions and Ammonius' Work

Before leaving Ammonius' work we should pause to consider one further piece of information that may be gleaned from the comparison with the *Hexapla*. One of the advances in the recent study of Origen is the recognition of the importance of late-antique grammatical training as the background to his Christian scholarship. The work of Bernhard Neuschäfer was pioneering in this respect and has been followed by many since.[32] Neuschäfer drew attention to the fact that it was classical Alexandrian Homeric philology that provided the tools necessary for Origen's creation of the *Hexapla*. Following the lead of literary critics like Zenodotus and Aristarchus, Origen called his text-critical work an exercise in διόρθωσις, since he, like his predecessors, engaged in the comparative analysis of rival versions in an attempt to establish an authoritative text.[33] More recently Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams have emphasized that Origen was not simply appropriating the tools of Hellenistic scholarship for the church.

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[31] Matthew R Crawford, "Diatessaron, a Misnomer? The Evidence from Ephrem's Commentary," *Early Christianity* 4 (2013): 362-385. The question of how to relate the titles of the two works by Tatian and Ammonius was also addressed by Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 34; Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius," 5. Zahn correctly points out that such an original title would have been unlikely to have been invented twice independently, so there must be some relation between the two. However, Zahn concluded that the title originated with Tatian and was later copied by Ammonius, whereas I want to argue the reverse, namely, that Ammonius first used the title and the later tradition assigned it subsequently to Tatian's work in light of the inherent ambiguity of Tatian's actual title.

[32] Bernhard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18/1-2 (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987). Cf. Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25-66.

[33] Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 85-138.

Rather, he was on the cutting edge of philological scholarship, since no other classical text existed in as many versions as the Hebrew scriptures, and no other undertaking of philological scholarship was executing on such a grand scale as his *Hexapla*. Thus they conclude that the *Hexapla* was "one of the greatest single monuments of Roman scholarship, and the first serious product of the application to Christian culture of the tools of Greek philology and criticism."[34]

Grafton and Williams are no doubt correct to emphasize the unprecedented scale of the project Origen embarked upon, but they fail to note that he had at least one significant precursor who carried out a similar project also based in Alexandrian philological scholarship. In a fragment of a letter quoted by Eusebius, Origen justified his own interest in philosophy by pointing to the prior example of Heraclas, bishop of Alexandria, whom he found "with the teacher of philosophical studies" (παρὰ τῷ διδασκάλῳ τῶν φιλοσόφων μαθημάτων). Because Eusebius picks up in mid-letter, Origen does not state whom this philosopher was, but the historian cites this passage while still in the midst of his discussion of Porphyry's statement about Origen studying with Ammonius. For this reason, Mark Edwards is probably right that the unnamed master with whom bishop Heraclas studied was the same Ammonius mentioned by Porphyry as also the teacher of Origen.[35] The importance of this passage for my argument is that Origen goes on to state that, by studying with this philosopher, Heraclas "was constantly engaged in the philological criticism of the books of the Greeks, so far as he was able" (βιβλία τε Ἑλλήνων κατὰ δύναμιν οὐ παύεται φιλολογῶν).[36] Similarly, if we accept Edwards' argument that Origen's teacher Ammonius was the Peripatetic Ammonius, it is striking that Longinus singled out this Ammonius precisely for his philological learning, calling him, along with a certain Ptolemy, "the most erudite (φιλολογώτατος) men of their epoch, Ammonius in particular, whose learning (πολυμαθίαν) was unequalled."[37] If this Ammonius was Origen's tutor, as seems likely, then the foundation for his later textual scholarship in the *Hexapla* was laid through Ammonius' tutelage in literary criticism.

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[34] Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 131.
[35] Edwards, "Ammonius, Teacher of Origen," 171. So also Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety*, 43-44.
[36] Eusebius, *h.e.* 6.19.12-14 (Bardy, SC 41.116-117).

These reports suggest that Origen's application of Alexandrian literary scholarship to Christian sources was not completely unprecedented. Rather, Ammonius had already pioneered this approach, which his more famous pupil later deployed on a grander scale.[38] Just as the Hebrew Scriptures existed in more editions than any other ancient text, and so required the development of new methods to handle this textual plurality, so also the fourfold gospel, consisting of four irreducibly distinct yet similar texts in a single corpus, was a situation without exact parallel in classical or Jewish sources, and it is therefore not surprising that it too elicited a cutting-edge response from the scholars of Alexandria. Scholarly concerns about the internal unity and coherence of a text had emerged in the third and second centuries BCE in the work of Zenodotus and Aristarchus on Homer, and Alexandrian Jewish scholars adopted their methods for the purpose of dealing with apparent contradictions in the Septuagint.[39] Ammonius, who must have been well trained in this same Alexandrian literary tradition, represents an important early attempt to apply such literary methods to the fourfold gospel.

Hence, although Grafton and Williams may be correct that the *Hexapla* "spawned a range of imitations and adaptations intended for a variety of uses" and that later Christian authors "attributed the whole tradition [of multicolumn Bibles] to Origen as its intellectual father," Origen in fact probably drew the inspiration for his work from the earlier literary scholarship of Ammonius who had already pioneered this format as a convenient way to highlight the relationship between the four gospels.[40] It is therefore unfortunate that, while Origen is regularly and rightly lauded for his monumental contribution to Old Testament textual criticism with his *Hexapla*, Ammonius is not typically accorded the same respect when it comes to gospels scholarship. In fact an

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[37] Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 20, 49-57. Cf. Edwards, "Ammonius, Teacher of Origen," 179-180.
[38] Edwards also uses Ammonius' gospels scholarship as evidence for "the supremacy of the philological method in Alexandria" (*Origen against Plato*, 18).
[39] On concerns about contradictions and coherence in Homer, see Nünlist, *The Ancient Critic at Work*, 27-34, 157-164, 174-184. On the appropriation of these scholarly methods for Jewish Bible exegesis, see Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), especially 39-46, 118-129. Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety*, 35-37, stresses the concern for "harmony" that characterizes Ammonius' work, but she neglects Alexandrian literary scholarship as an important context in which such topics had long been debated.
[40] Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 114.

appreciation of the complexity of gospel relationships did not first emerge in eighteenth-century Germany. Rather, educated Christians became aware of this issue perhaps not more than a century after the last evangelist put down his pen, and the attempt to use state-of-the-art scholarly tools to better understand the problem is to be traced back to the philological scholarship of late-antique Alexandria.

2. The Canon Tables of Eusebius of Caesarea

2.1. The Occasion of Eusebius' Creation

Let us now consider how this early tradition of gospels scholarship, which began in late-second century Alexandria, was carried forward over a century later by Eusebius in Caesarea. In brief, Eusebius' contribution to the study of gospel relationships was a system comprising three elements, each a necessary component. First, at the head of the four gospels, as a kind of preface, stood his *Letter to Carpianus* which gave an account of the origins of the system, and succinct directions for its use. Second, the text of each gospel was divided into a series of sections, some less than a sentence in length, others extending for whole chapters or more. These sections were numbered individually within each gospel, and their length was determined by the presence or absence of related material from the other gospels. This distinction is important. These sections do not correspond to sense units, in the manner of the κεφάλαια or chapter headings, but are instead of greatly varying lengths from individual phrases to what would be more than a single chapter in today's reckoning. Finally, these sections were collated at the beginning of the codex in ten tables, or canons, showing the passages that have parallels among four, three, and two gospels, and finally those passages which were distinct to each gospel. What Eusebius created, in short, was the earliest known system of cross-references.

We can identify three factors that prompted the creation and propagation of this innovative system. The first is Eusebius' interest in exploiting the potential of the codex for novel ways of presenting complex material. This is a theme of his work that has been explored most recently by Grafton and Williams,

who aptly describe the Caesarean bishop as "a Christian impresario of the codex." In fact, at least two of Eusebius' other works contained lists or tables that he described as κανόνες. The most wide-ranging of these was his *Chronicle*, an ambitious attempt to condense Babylonian, Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, and Roman chronography into a single composition. The first half of this two-part work consisted of a discussion of the sources and problems attendant on such an enterprise, and the second half, bearing the title Χρονικοὶ Κανόνες, boldly combined these sources into a unified tabular format allowing cross-referencing between various histories.[41] Although the discipline of chronography was centuries old by the time Eusebius tried his hand at it, his approach was innovative in the way in which it visually displayed the complex material he drew from his sources. This approach may have been inspired by the *Hexapla*, but its application to historical materials "represented a dramatic formal innovation" which resulted in "a stunningly original work of scholarship."[42] The second work employing such tables was much more restricted in scope, Eusebius' Πίναξ for the psalms. This consisted of seven κανόνες listing the psalms attributed to various authors.[43] Though less complex than the evangelical canons, this work demonstrates Eusebius applying a similar method to biblical material, and probably served as a precursor to his attempt to apply the same approach in a more developed way to the gospels.

Seen in light of these other two works, the Canon Tables for the gospels

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[41] See Eusebius' mention of the title of the work at *HE* 1.1.6; *Praeparatio evangelica* 10.9.11. For a discussion of Eusebius' achievement with this work, see Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 133-177. Also helpful is Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 111-120. The phrase "Christian impresario of the codex" is the title of chapter four of Grafton and Williams' book. The textual tradition of Eusebius' *Chronicle* is complex. While only fragments of the original Greek survive, the second half of the work was translated into Latin and supplemented by Jerome, and the full work survives in Armenian, though with some lacunae.
[42] Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 175.
[43] This work may be accessed most easily in Martin. Wallraff, "The Canon Tables of the Psalms: An Unknown Work of Eusebius of Caesarea," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 67 (2014): 1-14, who helpfully includes color images of the sole surviving witness to this work, as well as a transcription and translation on pp.4-7. Wallraff exaggerates somewhat when he describes this as an "unknown" work. As he acknowledges, attention was first drawn to it in Giovanni Mercati, *Osservazioni a proemi del Salterio di Origene, Ippolito, Eusebio, Cirillo Alessandrino e altri, con frammenti inediti,* Studi e Testi 142 (Rome: Città del Vaticano, 1948), 95-104. Moreover, Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 198-199, also make mention of the work, as does M.-J. Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe-Ve siècles)* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1982-1985), I.71-72). On the sense of the word Πίναξ used in the title see also *HE* 6.32.3 where Eusebius says that in another work he has provided τοὺς πίνακας listing the works included in the Caesarean library collected under the patronage of his

appear as but one part of Eusebius' larger program of experimenting with the codex form to find innovative ways to present complex data. Each of these three works, however, was an answer to a distinctive problem. In the *Chronicle* the main obstacle was integrating the various sources and finding ways to synthesize the competing dating systems. The Πίναξ on the psalms was more straightforward, requiring a simple listing of the number for each psalm under its appropriate κανών. However, the Canon Tables for the gospels were a solution to a problem of a different sort, namely, how to do justice to both the similarities and differences among these four texts. Nevertheless, the thread that unites these three works is the attempt to present a solution *visually*. As highlighted by Grafton and Williams, Cassiodorus was right when in the sixth century he described Eusebius' *Chronicle* as consisting of "images of histories" (*imagines historiarum*).[44] Cassiodorus' phrase implies that the visual nature of the *Chronicle* was a striking and original feature, and the same would no doubt have been understood by the users of the Canon Tables for the gospels. Eusebius' goal in using such a visual format was probably threefold: 1) to enable the understanding of complex source material; 2) to provide ease of access as a reference tool; and 3) to make a distinctly theological point. We will shortly consider more specifically how Eusebius expressed the latter principle through his evangelical tables.

The second factor behind the creation and propagation of Eusebius' gospel canons is his relationship with Constantine. Carl Nordenfalk long ago associated the Canon Tables with Constantine's request, at some point in the 330s, for "fifty volumes . . . copies, that is, of the divine Scriptures" (σωμάτια ... τῶν θείων δηλαδὴ γραφῶν) for churches in the imperial capital.[45] This request, of course, is unclear regarding what kind of books the emperor desires, whether gospel codices or whole Bible pandects, but in either case, there can be no doubt that at least some of the manuscripts contained the four gospels. It is unlikely that Eusebius would have drawn up the Canon Tables for the first time for these copies, since their

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predecessor and mentor Pamphilus.

[44] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.17.2. Cf. Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 142.

[45] Eusebius, *De vita Constantini* 4.36.2. Carl Adam Johan Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln,* (Göteborg: O. Isacsons boktryckeri a.-b., 1938), 50. Nordenfalk notes that E. Schwartz and O. Bardenhewer had previously connected the creation of the canons with

creation would have been a complex undertaking that would have hampered the speed with which the bishop could comply with the imperial request. However, this surely was an ideal occasion for the propagation of the Canon Tables and may help to explain why they became so popular.[46] If we knew more of the identity of the "Carpianus" to whom Eusebius wrote to dedicate his canon tables, we might be able to add further weight to the link with Constantine and the imperial capital. Eusebius simply addresses him as "beloved brother in the Lord," a sufficiently generic greeting to prohibit any more precise identification.[47] Nevertheless, it is plausible that Constantine's request gave Eusebius the occasion for making his creation more widespread, even if it was not the direct impetus for his labor.

2.2 The Relation of Eusebius's Canons to Ammonius' *Diatessaron Gospel*

The third factor which provided the impetus for the creation of the Canon Tables was the prior work of Ammonius, as Eusebius himself says in his *Letter to Carpianus*. Though he praises Ammonius' industriousness and acknowledges his own debt to him, he points out that due to the method employed by the

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Constantine's request.

[46] On Constantine's request, see Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 215-221, who tentatively follow the earlier argument of T.C. Skeat that Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus originated in Caesarea in relation to Constantine's request ("The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," *Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1999): 583-625). This view, however, has not convinced many New Testament scholars. Sinaiticus has the marginal notations dividing the text of the gospels into the appropriate sections and canons, but the tables themselves are now lost, or perhaps the manuscript was never completed. Vaticanus contains no trace of the apparatus. Skeat's suggestion (p.615) that Eusebius abandoned his idea of including Canon Tables out of fear of enraging Constantine with further delay is more than a little speculative.

[47] In fact, the name Καρπιανός is extremely rare in the sources, and does not show up at all in A.H.M. Jones, *et al.*, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971-1992). According to *Thesaurus Lingua Graeca*, the only occurrence of the word prior to Eusebius comes in Ptolemy, who gives the name to an otherwise unknown people group living in Sarmatia, near the Vistula river (*Geographia* 3.5.10). Perhaps slightly more helpful is the fact that the name occurs in later Byzantine sources to refer to a certain district within Constantinople. The chronicler Theophanes the Confessor reports an attack by a mob upon the Emperor Maurice (r.582-602) which occurred as the emperor was passing through "the quarter of Carpianus" (ἐν τοῖς Καρπιανοῦ), and a later figure carried the name during the reign of Constantine Pogonatus (r.668-685) (*Chronographia* 283; cf. R. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1950), 342). Given the rarity of the term, it is tempting to connect this district in the imperial capital with the dedicatee of Eusebius' letter, which might substantiate the link with Constantine's request, but to do so necessarily enters the territory of unfounded speculation.

Alexandrian,

> ὡς ἐξ ἀνάγκης συμβῆναι τὸν τῆς ἀκολουθίας εἱρμὸν τῶν τριῶν διαφθαρῆναι ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ ὕφει τῆς ἀναγνώσεως.[48]
>
> the unavoidable result was that the continuous thread of the other three was destroyed, preventing the reading of the context.

Eusebius rightly highlights a problem with Ammonius' work. Though it usefully compares similar passages by placing them in parallel columns, it makes it impossible to read anything other than Matthew in its proper sequence. This was a serious limitation to Ammonius' *Diatessaron-Gospel*, which would have prevented it from ever being produced on a mass scale, since such dismembered gospelbooks could hardly have been used liturgically. In such a setting, the *Diatessaron-Gospel* would never rise beyond the category of an innovative scholarly reference tool.[49] Recognizing this problem, Eusebius presents a twofold goal for his composition. He wanted to achieve the fundamental goal of Ammonius' work—showing parallel material between the gospels— but to do so "while preserving the structure and sequence of the remaining gospels throughout" (σωζομένου καὶ τοῦ τῶν λοιπῶν δι' ὅλου σώματός τε καὶ εἱρμοῦ). His criticism of Ammonius is, therefore, carefully measured. He does not wholly reject his predecessor's work, and his earlier praise for the Alexandrian's labor should be taken as sincere. Nevertheless, he recognizes an inevitable limitation of Ammonius' method, and hopes to improve on this earlier composition by using a "different method" (καθ' ἑτέραν μέθοδον).

Up to this point there is widespread agreement. However, the exact relation between Eusebius' work and that of Ammonius is not uncontested territory. Although the sections and numbers in Eusebius' system have often been called by the adjective "Ammonian,"[50] there exists a significant contrary trend that insists that these are the sole creation of Eusebius himself. This is a position that was stated emphatically in 1871 by John W. Burgon, who described

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[48] NA28, 89*.
[49] So also Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 33, who pointed out that Ammonius' work was intended to serve "nicht gottesdienstlichen, sondern gelehrten Zwecken."
[50] E.g., D.C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 316, who asserts "the paragraphs are properly called the Ammonian Sections, and the numbers themselves the Ammonian Section numbers,

it as a "vulgar error" to "designate the Eusebian Sections as the 'Sections of *Ammonius*'."[51] Burgon's arguments to this end were, 1) that Eusebius' canon tables were designed to show non-Matthean parallels among Mark, John, and Luke, and to show material distinct to the latter three, whereas such was impossible on Ammonius' system; and 2) the canons and the sections "mutually imply one another" such that one without the other would be useless.[52] Hence Eusebius must have created them both. In 1881 Theodor Zahn made the same point, though for different reasons, and nearly forty years later he was still trying to convince the scholarly guild of its error in this respect.[53] In the early twentieth century E. Nestle, expressly following Burgon, similarly said one should never speak of the "Ammonian sections" since the section division was entirely the work of Eusebius.[54] More recently Timothy Barnes has concluded that the term "Ammonian Sections" "does Eusebius a grave injustice, for the division of the Gospels into numbered sections is his idea."[55] These arguments are rightly aimed at giving Eusebius due credit for his invention, as well as refuting the error, going back at least to Victor of Capua, that Ammonius created a gospel harmony, rather than a synopsis. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that these scholars have gone too far in suggesting that the two works had nothing whatsoever in common.

Rightly articulating the relationship between the contributions of these two figures centers around the interpretation of a single word found in Eusebius' letter. As he transitions to describing his own creation, Eusebius notes that "he took (his) raw data from the labor of the aforementioned [Ammonius]" (ἐκ τοῦ πονήματος τοῦ προειρημένου ἀνδρὸς εἰλημφὼς ἀφορμάς).[56] What exactly did Eusebius take from Ammonius? Barnes translates ἀφορμάς as "point of departure," Burgon

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they and the table numbers themselves being the Eusebian Numbers."

[51] John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark Vindicated Against Recent Critical Objectors and Established* (London: James Parker and Co., 1871), 304. Burgon goes on forcefully: "*to reason about* the lost work of Ammonius from the Sections of Eusebius (as Tischendorf and the rest habitually do) is an offence against historical Truth which no one who values his critical reputation will probably hereafter venture to commit."

[52] Ibid., 295-298.

[53] Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 31-32; Zahn, "Der Exeget Ammonius," 8.

[54] Nestle, "Die Eusebianische Evangeliensynopse," 41, disagreeing with the description of the sections in the edition of the Vulgate by Wordsworth and White.

[55] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 122.

[56] NA28, 89*.

as "hint" or "suggestion," and Zahn as "Anregung."[57] For the term LSJ lists "occasion" or "pretext" as well as "means with which one begins" or "resources." In keeping with the latter sense, the word can take on the economic meaning "capital" or the rhetorical meaning "food for argument, material, subject."[58] So the semantic range is broad enough to encompass the more generic causal sense of "occasion" or "impetus" as well as a more specific sense indicating a greater degree of material contiuity between the ἀφορμή and the resulting piece of work.

The latter sense, I want to argue, is what Eusebius had in mind, especially in light the fact that he uses the term in the plural. According to *Thesaurus Linguae Graeca*, the word occurs some thirty-three times in his corpus, in both the singular and plural forms. To illustrate his usage the five instances in which the word is used in his *Ecclesiastical History* will suffice. When it is used in the singular, it usually means something more like "occasion" or "pretext." For example, Eusebius quotes Melito of Sardis stating that certain persons were persecuting the Christians by taking their "occasion" from the imperial edicts. In another passage the church historian reports that he is unable to give more precise information about a number of figures because he does not have the "occasion" to do so. In another instance Eusebius passes on a report that Satan entered into the schismatic Novatus, becoming the "occasion" for his unbelief.[59] However, when it is used in the plural, the term implies that the ἀφορμαί bear some more material relation to that which results from it. Thus, Eusebius quotes the report of Irenaeus that the heretic Cerdon took his "material" from those who followed Simon Magus. Later on the historian asserts that by studying the Scriptures from his childhood Origen had stored up "no small amount of material of the words of the faith."[60] Given this distinction between the usage of the singular and the plural of ἀφορμή, the passage in the *Letter to Carpianus* implies that the deficiencies of Ammonius' work were not simply the inspiration for Eusebius' labor. Rather, the *Diatessaron-Gospel* provided for Eusebius something akin to the "material" or perhaps better "raw data" which he

[57] Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses*, 127; Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 32; Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 121. Zahn specifies that the only thing Eusebius took from Ammonius was the idea of presenting parallel passages alongside one another.
[58] LSJ, s.v. ἀφορμή, I.2; I.3; I.4; I.5.
[59] *HE* 4.26.5; 5.27.1; 6.43.14 (Bardy, SC 31.209; SC 41.74, 157).
[60] *HE* 4.11.2; 6.2.7 (Bardy, SC 31.174; SC 41.84).

reworked according to a different method for his own composition. Therefore, in light of Eusebius' usage of the plural of ἀφορμή, those scholars who have argued there is no real relation between the *Diatessaron-Gospel* and the Canon Tables are mistaken, since Eusebius himself indicates that there is a significant material continuity between the two works.

2.3 Eusebius' *Modus Operandi*

We can state more precisely in what this continuity consisted by speculating for a moment about how Eusebius must have gone about his work. Ammonius had essentially already broken up the Gospel of Matthew into sections, simply based on where he ended one parallel and began another. Similarly, his method had the same effect for the other three gospels, at least for those passages with Matthean parallels, since he had to decide which chunks of these gospels to use as parallels for Matthew. In other words, what Ammonius had already accomplished was establishing a set of *parallels* with Matthew, and we may therefore legitimately call these the "Ammonian parallels."

The data constituted by these parallels greatly decreased the degree of labor required by Eusebius. To rework it into his own method, he would have had to follow five steps. First, as he looked through the *Diatessaron-Gospel* he would have easily discovered that there were eight possible combinations that appeared: (1) Mt-Mk-Lk-Jn, (2) Mt-Mk-Lk, (3) Mt-Lk-Jn, (4) Mt-Mk-Jn, (5) Mt-Lk, (6) Mt-Mk, (7) Mt-Jn; and finally material distinctive to Matthew without any parallel. As noted long ago by the ninth-century Irish scholar Sedulius Scottus, Eusebius likely took over these eight combinations, making them Canons I-VII and Canon X^{Mt} in his system.[61] In other words, Eusebius first used Ammonius to establish the categories of relationship between the gospels. It follows, then, that the parallel passages noted in these canons likely go back to Ammonius, though we cannot exclude the possibility that Eusebius tweaked the parallels here and there to his own liking. If Ammonius had also included non-

[61] Sedulius composed a commentary on the entirety of Eusebius' *Letter to Carpianus*, titled *Expositio Eusebii in Decem Canones*. The text may be found in Mario Espositio, "Hiberno-Latin Manuscripts in the Libraries of Switzerland. Part I," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 28 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910): 83-91. The reference to Eusebius taking over material from Ammonius may be found at §3 (Espositio, 85).

Matthean parallels among the latter three gospels—something he might have done, but which we cannot confirm—then Eusebius would also have taken his parallels for Canons VIII (Lk-Mk) and IX (Lk-Jn), as well as the remaining material for Canon X from his predecessor.

Eusebius' second step would have been to make marginal notations in an unmarked copy of Matthew to break the text up into sections and then enumerate these sections. Eusebius never tells us that Ammonius numbered his synopsis, and there is no reason to think he would have needed to do so. Therefore the numbers are Eusebius' contribution, and we should accordingly speak of the Eusebian numbers.

Third, the historian had to work through Ammonius' parallels and use them to mark the parallels in the margin of the text of the latter three gospels, a more difficult task given that these parallels would have been included in Ammonius' scheme according to Matthew's narrative order, not according to the narrative order of the other three, and so would have required much turning of pages to find the correct passages. If Ammonius had not included non-Matthean parallels in his work, Eusebius would then have had to work through the unmarked text of the latter three gospels to establish the parallels among them. At this point he could have used any of the three as a plumbline to check for parallels. His apparent choice was to use Luke, most likely because Luke, being the longest of the remaining three, offered the potential for the most parallels with the other two.[62] Working back through Luke's gospel, looking for material similar to Mark and John, Eusebius must have further subdivided these three gospels, noting down the parallels for his Canons VIII (Lk-Mk) and IX (Lk-Jn).

Eusebius' fourth step would have been to enumerate the sections he had created in Mark, Luke, and John, and his fifth and final step was to collate into tables the section numbers according to the relational categories he had established. This entire process was intricate and complex, so the fact that the resulting system is almost entirely free of errors is a remarkable scholarly achievement.[63] In conclusion, then, we can say that the majority of the parallels,

[62] As also noted by Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln*, 48.
[63] Occasional slips have been identified in Harvey K. McArthur, "Eusebian Sections and Canons," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965), 255-256; Carl Nordenfalk, "The Eusebian Canon-Tables: Some Textual Problems," *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984): 96-104.

at least those for Canons I-VII and one quarter of Canon X, are the work of Ammonius, and so should be called Ammonian parallels. However, the sectioning, enumerating, and collation were the work of Eusebius. Therefore, the resulting composition was truly the product of the labor of both scholars, with Eusebius appropriating and improving his predecessor's work. Accordingly, the opening page of the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels, which presents a combined portrait of Ammonius and Eusebius, is indeed a fitting tribute to the work of the two men.

At least three further implications follow from this reconstruction. First, assuming this continuity between the works of Ammonius and Eusebius, it should, in theory, be possible to reconstruct Ammonius' *Diatessaron-Gospel* by working backwards through Eusebius' *modus operandi*. In this way we can at least come reasonably close to the work of the Alexandrian scholar, and so recover a pioneering piece of biblical scholarship from the late second or early third century CE.

Second, the fundamental conceptual breakthrough that enabled Eusebius to advance beyond the work of Ammonius was his realization that gospel passages—groups of words and sentences—could be symbolically represented by numbers.[64] In fact, the columnar format of the Canon Tables was carried over directly from the layout design of the *Diatessaron-Gospel*, with Eusebius simply replacing the sections of text with numbers.[65] As early as the second century BCE authors began to cite poetic and historical works by referring to a given book number and by the third century CE this had become the standard method.[66] Although this was surely the source of Eusebius' inspiration, the

[64] Wallraff, "The Canon Tables of the Psalms," 14, comes to a similar conclusion, and suggests that Eusebius first used this insight in his Canons for the Psalms before trying it out in a much more complex way in his Canon Tables on the gospels.
[65] Though this is not to deny the possibility that Eusebius might also have been influenced by other visual sources that also employed columns and numbers. The Ptolemaic astronomical tables preserved in Vat. gr. 1291, fol. 22r and the famous Roman Calendar of 354 present the closest parallels. See the discussion at Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln*, 117-126. An image of the astronomical tables was also included as plate five in Carl Nordenfalk, "Canon Tables on Papyrus," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36 (1982): 29-38. Even the name of the astronomical tables is similar to that of Eusebius' work: Πρόχειροι κανόνες ("Handy Tables").
[66] See Carolyn Higbie, "Divide and Edit: A Brief History of Book Divisions," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 105 (2010): 1-31. Higbie concludes, "the most enduring result of Alexandrian scholarship was the book division, which the Alexandrians did not invent, but which they put to good use" (p.29). The first author for whom we have evidence of using separate books as a way of structuring a large work was the fourth-century BCE historian Ephorus. The later historians

potential of this insight had never been exploited to such a degree by any previous author, whether pagan or Christian. The result of this innovation was that a codex with Canon Tables began with a symbolic summary of the fourfold gospel before one even arrived at the start of the actual text. In an age accustomed to scholarly tools like footnotes, indexes, and cross-references, it is difficult for us to imagine how startlingly innovative Canon Tables must have appeared to a late-antique reader. The closest modern equivalent is perhaps the way in which the four mathematical relationships represented by Maxwell's equations elegantly summarize physical phenomena related to electricity and magnetism. In a loosely analogous sense, Eusebius' Canon Tables presented in symbolic fashion the literary interrelationships among the four canonical gospels, reducing this complex problem to numerical simplicity.

Finally, Eusebius' improvement upon Ammonius' earlier attempt had the advantage that it could be included in liturgical gospelbooks. While the *Diatessaron-Gospel* could never have been more than a secondary reference tool, Eusebius found a way to accomplish the same purpose without disrupting the sequence of each gospel, thereby allowing for his new system to be included in liturgical codices and widely disseminated. The implication of this advance should not be missed. Eusebius significantly contributed to the developing Christian traditions of late antiquity and the early medieval period by making the elite philological scholarship of Hellenistic Alexandria available on a scale few could ever have imagined.

2.4 Eusebius' Visual Message with the Canon Tables

In the final two sections of this article I wish to highlight the way in which the Canon Tables communicate a theological message both visually and textually. The idea of using a visual medium to make a theological statement has been argued for Eusebius' other works. For example, Grafton and Williams have drawn attention to the way in which his *Chronicle* began with tables of parallel monarchies, but, as the reader progressed through history, all others fell away to leave only the list of Roman rulers. As a kind of "dynamic hieroglyph" this

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Polybius and Diodorus Siculus made even greater use of book divisions. It is, therefore, no surprise that the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius developed this insight even

display of textual material communicated Eusebius' conviction that "world history culminated in the contemporary Roman Empire."[67] Scholars have long speculated about a similar impulse evident in the Canon Tables. Carl Nordenfalk, whose *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln* is still unsurpassed as an art-historical investigation into the history of the Canon Tables, pointed out that the ten canons created by Eusebius do not exhaust all of the possible combinations presented by the fourfold gospel, since the parallels Mk-Lk-Jn as well as Mk-Jn are absent.[68] Eusebius' omission of these categories is, however, more likely simply due to the small amount of content for these canons, since there is little material shared by Mark, Luke, and John that is not also shared by Matthew, and even less non-Matthean content that is contained jointly in Mark and John. A more compelling observation related to the number ten is that Eusebius did not assign the distinctive material for each gospel to a separate canon, as his prior method with Canons I-IX would imply, but instead grouped all four distinct categories together under a single canon, Canon X. This clear departure from his pattern with the first nine categories suggests a desire to preserve the number ten, as though the number of the canons was intrinsic to the overall message communicated by the tables.

The number ten seems also to have been a factor in the page-layout of the tables. Nordenfalk attempted to reconstruct the Eusebian archetype from the surviving late-antique and early medieval models, and after examining a number of later examples, he concluded that the tables were originally distributed over five folia, comprising ten pages.[69] Nordenfalk plausibly suggested that this

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further.

[67] Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*, 141.

[68] McArthur, "Eusebian Sections and Canons," 251, suggested that these combinations were omitted becauase Eusebius found no parallel sections in the gospels in question. Nordenfalk, "Canon Tables on Papyrus," 30, n.6, objected that there were, in fact, some parallels that would have been suitable for these hypothetical canons, but he was only able to offer a handful of examples.

[69] Nordenfalk, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln*, 102-103. The Armenian tradition was especially ardent in preserving a total of ten pages for the prefatory Eusebian material. See Dickran Kouymjian, "Armenian Manuscript Illumination in the Formative Period: Text Groups, Eusebian Apparatus, Evangelists' Portraits," in *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra Culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV-XI),* Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 43, (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1996), 1037. The Syriac and Latin traditions expanded the total number of pages well beyond the original sequence. For a succinct and clear overview of the layout and decoration of canon tables in the Greek, Latin, and Syriac traditions, summarizing much of Nordenfalk's classic work, see Petra Sevrugian, "Kanontafeln," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 20 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2004), 28-42. For further bibliography

highlighting of the number ten is due to Pythagorean interest in the relation of the numbers four and ten, since ten is the sum of the numbers from one to four.[70] As noted by Nordenfalk, Eusebius himself highlighted this Pythagorean theme in his *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, defining ten as the sum of the numbers from one to four, and calling ten "a full and perfect number," since it contains "every kind and measure of all numbers, proportions, concords, and harmonies."[71] The fact that the Canon Tables proceed in descending order from parallels between four, then three, then two gospels, and finally passages unique to each gospel reveals a pattern of 4-3-2-1, highlighting the mathematical relationship made explicit in the passage from the *Oration*. The aforementioned Sedulius Scottus suggested a further possibility, that the number of the canons was intended to demonstrate the "greatest agreement" (*concordissimam*) between the gospel and the decalogue.[72] Neither the Pythagorean symbolism and the Mosaic one should be excluded from Eusebius' possible intent. The mathematical principle emphasizes that the four gospels represent the summation and perfection of divine truth, while the analogy with the decalogue highlights the agreement of the Christian scriptures with those from Israel.

2.5 The Eusebian Canon Tables as a Hermeneutical Key to a Canonical Reading of the Fourfold Gospel

This concern to emphasize the unity of divine truth, despite its varied presentation in textually embodied form, surfaces again in the kinds of parallels Eusebius included in his tables. Some parallels were obvious enough, such as the feeding of the 5,000 which is recorded in all four gospels. However, the decision of what is and is not a legitimate parallel at some point becomes an interpretive decision, and, indeed, Eusebius exploited precisely this fact to guide his readers

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on the decoration of Canon Tables, see Underwood, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels"; Theodor Klauser, "Das Ciborium in der älteren christlichen Buchmalerei," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen,* 7 (1961): 191-207; Carl Nordenfalk, "The Apostolic Canon Tables," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 105 (1963): 17-34; Klaus Wessel, "Kanontafeln," in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1978), 3.927-968.

[70] Nordenfalk, "Canon Tables on Papyrus," 29-30.

[71] *De laudibus Constantini* 6.5; 6.14 (Ivar A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke, Erster Band* (GCS; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1902), 207, 210).

[72] Sedulius Scottus, *Explanationes in praefationes sancti Hieronymi ad evangelia* 16 (PL 103.342).

towards a canonical reading of the fourfold gospel.[73] Two examples will suffice to demonstrate this tendency of his Canon Tables. First, as highlighted recently by Markus Bockmuehl, Luke's account of the Last Supper scene uniquely contains a dominical prediction of Peter's repentance and restoration following his denial of Jesus (Lk 22:32), yet Luke himself never reports when this turning took place.[74] When Eusebius came upon this verse, rather than relegate it to distinctly Lukan material in Canon X, as one might expect, he placed it in Canon IX, which consists of parallels between Luke and John. Alongside this one Lukan passage (Lk 22:32 = Lk §274) he placed the three Johannine passages in which Jesus gave to Peter the commission to feed his flock (Jn 21:15c, 16c, 17c = Jn §§227, 229, 231). Further adding to the web of intertextuality, Eusebius also linked the great catch of fish in the Johannine post-resurrection scene (Jn 21:1-6, 11 = Jn §219, 222) with the catch of fish in Luke's account of Peter's call to discipleship (Lk 5:4-7 = Lk §30). The Caesarean bishop was even careful to include not only the reporting of the great catch, but also Peter's impetuous response at the revelation of Jesus' identity. These parallels are merely suggestive, rather than explicit statements about how these passages ought to be interpreted. Nevertheless, they imply that the Lukan silence about when Peter's restoration occurred is answered by the Johannine commission, which is meant to echo Peter's initial calling to discipleship in its Lukan form. With these textual links Eusebius was leaving a trail of breadcrumbs to guide readers of the fourfold gospel to a canonical reading of the text, one that does not erase the difference between the four, while also attempting to discern their inner unity.

A second example, which is even more startling, concerns the opening of the fourfold gospel. Alongside the very first verse, Matthew 1:1, Eusebius made a hugely significant theological statement by putting the Matthean genealogy, neither in the uniquely Matthean material in Canon X nor in the Matthew-Luke

[73] McArthur, "Eusebian Sections and Canons," 252-253, concluded from some of these unexpected parallels that "Eusebius did not intend his parallels necessarily to represent two or more versions of the same incident or saying," but was instead intending merely to highlight "similar material." McArthur did not consider, however, whether some of these parallels might have a more theological purpose. On a canonical reading of the fourfold gospel, see especially Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), chapters 10-11.

[74] Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 155-163.

parallels in Canon V, but instead in Canon III which lists parallel passages in Matthew, Luke, and John. This was surely a less than intuitive decision, since only Matthew and Luke record genealogies of Jesus (Mt 1:1-6 = Mt §1; Lk 3:23-38 = Lk §14), and even these present obvious difficulties of harmonization. The Johannine content that Eusebius saw fit to parallel with these two discordant human genealogies comprised three sections from the Johannine prologue which recount the eternity of the Word, his coming to enlighten the world, and his incarnation (Jn 1:1-5, 9-10, 14 = Jn §§1, 3, 5). By including these parallels Eusebius no doubt had in mind something like a dual-nature Christology, in which the Matthean and Lukan accounts tell of the human origins of Jesus and the Johannine passages his deity. Moreover, since this is content from Canon III, which Eusebius probably took over from Ammonius' *Diatessaron-Gospel*, this intertextual reading of these passages likely goes back to late second-century Alexandria. In fact, Clement of Alexandria, who must have been a contemporary of Ammonius, suggested just such a reading of these three gospels, in a fragment of his *Hypotyposes* preserved in Eusebius' own *Ecclesiastical History*. According to Eusebius, Clement said that the gospels "containing genealogies" were written first, and that then John wrote "a spiritual gospel" to complement those earlier ones that had recorded "the bodily facts."[75] Eusebius was, therefore, carrying forward what was already an established tradition. However, by including these parallels in his Canon Tables, which became a standard paratextual apparatus across the diverse Christian traditions, he ensured that later readers of the fourfold gospel would not miss this fundamental connection, which, in his perspective at least, was necessary for a canonical reading of the fourfold gospel and a proper perception of Jesus' identity.[76]

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to remind contemporary New

[75] Eusebius, *HE* 6.14.5-7 (Bardy, SC 41.107). See a discussion of this passage at Watson, *Gospel Writing*, 432-434.

[76] McArthur, "Eusebian Sections and Canons," 253, noted with surprise this parallel and concluded that Eusebius presumably "linked these together because they presented the background for the historical figure of Jesus." Nordenfalk, "Canon Tables on Papyrus," 37, more critically, described this as "not one of Eusebius' most convincing parallels" since the Matthean and Lukan material has been yoked to John "in a rather strained way."

Testament scholars of the often overlooked and underappreciated achievements of two seminal figures who stand at the head of the long tradition of study of the fourfold gospel. Of course, we should not underestimate the difference between Eusebius and Ammonius and modern scholars. For one thing, neither Eusebius nor probably Ammonius yet envisions a literary borrowing among the gospels. As Eusebius makes clear in his *Letter to Carpianus*, the four evangelists were guided by divine influence to speak "the same things," presumably independently of one another. Although Augustine would go on to suggest the possibility of one evangelist borrowing from another,[77] it would not be until the modern period that the implications of this claim were fully appreciated. Nevertheless, regardless of one's view of gospel origins, it is clear to any careful reader of the gospels that these four accounts overlap significantly and yet diverge sharply, and so relate to one another in complex ways. The *Diatessaron-Gospel* and the Canon Tables were two early attempts to provide readers of the fourfold gospel with a system that enabled one to attend to this diversity of witness, and yet discern within the diversity the singular identity of the one witnessed to. In this way Ammonius and Eusebius bequeathed to posterity an elegant system that enabled any reader of the text, from Ireland to Armenia, to study the interrelationships amongst the four. Awareness of this relational complexity first emerged in late second-century Alexandria, and eighteen centuries later the debate over it is still going on.

[77] See Watson, *Gospel Writing*, chapter 1.